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ABSTRACT

This manual presents a developmentally focused group intervention, ("But Mom (Dad) - I'm an Adult Now") developed by the Student Counseling Center at Illinois State University for college students who are having difficulty establishing autonomy from their family of origin. The group uses a condition of didactic presentations, experiential exercises, group discussion, and homework assignments; member and leader participation is strongly encouraged. The affective format consists of five, 2-hour, weekly sessions, with a brief college vacation period (e.g., Thanksgiving, spring break) between the fourth and fifth sessions. The break allows students to try new behaviors with their families, and then process those attempts with the rest of the group. The ideal group size is 8 to 12 members, with 2 co-leaders, preferably of mixed gender if the composition of the group is mixed. The group experience can stand alone or be used as an adjunct to counseling. Homesick or seriously disturbed/disruptive students should be screened out. The manual, designed for student group leaders and counselors, includes detailed session-by-session outlines and copies of handouts and exercises for each of the five group sessions: (1) introduction to group; (2) family roles; (3) see parents in a new light; (4) identifying conflict situations, and assertion; and (5) group closure. (Author/WAS)

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THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AUTONOMY: ASSISTING LATE ADOLESCENTS WITH POSITIVE MANAGEMENT OF SEPARATION ISSUES

A description of a developmentally-focused group intervention entitled

"BUT MOM (DAD) - I'M AN ADULT NOW!"

Presented at the American College Personnel Association
National Convention
Houston, TX March 14, 1983

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"BUT MOM (DAD) - I'M AN ADULT NOW!"

The group described in this packet was developed in the fall of 1981 by Therese de St. Aubin and Steve Rohner at the Illinois State University Student Counseling Center.* It is designed to help those college students who are having difficulty establishing autonomy with respect to their family of origin. A combination of didactic presentations, experiential exercises, group discussions, and homework assignments is used. Member and leader participation is strongly encouraged. Although some of the exercises have been drawn from other sources, the group is essentially an original creation and may be one of the first educational/experiential interventions designed to address this developmental concern.

The authors have found the following overall format to be effective: five two-hour weekly sessions, with a brief college vacation period (e.g., Thanksgiving, Spring break) between the fourth and fifth sessions. (Scheduling around a break provides the group members with an opportunity to try some alternative behaviors with their families during the holiday and then process those attempts with the rest of the group during the final session.)

The ideal size of the group is probably eight to twelve members, with two co-leaders (preferably of mixed gender if the group membership is also mixed). The group experience can either stand alone or be used as an adjunct to counseling/therapy for a student. Homesick or seriously disturbed/disruptive students should be screened out.

The remainder of this packet is comprised of a detailed session-by-session outline and copies of the handouts and exercises used. The authors have assumed that the potential leaders already have basic structured group leadership skills, so instructions will be included only as they apply to this particular group.

Enjoy!

*based on an idea from Nan Presser (from the same agency).

SESSION I

Introduction to Group

Activity	Rationale
1. Establish ground rules (attendance, confidentiality, punctuality, smoking, etc.).	1-4. Orientation
2. Alliterative Name-Game icebreaker. a. members choose an adjective that describes themselves and begins with the same sound as their first names (e.g., Artistic Andy). b. members introduce themselves as such to the group and briefly explain their choice of adjective.	
3. Members tell the group their reasons for being there; leaders also introduce selves and encourage members to ask questions of each other.	
4. Leaders give overview of the 5 group sessions.	
5. Brainstorming the "Rights of Emerging Adults". a. have members brainstorm the troublesome "should" messages that they attribute to their parents; leader writes them on chalkboard, newsprint, etc. b. change each "should" message around to state it in terms of a "right". c. Examples: (1) "You should tell your parents everything" WOULD BECOME "We have the right to not tell our parents everything" (2) "You should always be responsible" WOULD BECOME "We have the right to choose when to be responsible"	5. to increase and focus awareness on their frustrated needs and conflict situations with their parents. it is assumed that it is easier for them to be aware of "shoulds" rather then jump immediately into "rights".

Activity	Rationale
d. Discuss how it feels to change the "shoulds" to "rights".	
e. Leader copy the list of rights to distribute later in Session IV.	
6. Lecturette on Virginia Satir's family roles (Blamer, Placator, Computer, and Distractor) from Peoplemaking.	6. to give labels, framework for their thinking about their family roles.
7. Handout homework for Session II. (Family Animals and Table Talk)	

"BUT MOM (DAD) - I'M AN ADULT NOW!"

Homework for Session II

1. Family Animals:

If each of the members of your family were an animal, which animals would they be?

mother	_____	father _____	You _____
brothers	_____	_____	_____
sisters	_____	_____	_____
other	_____	_____	_____

2. Table Talk:

Think of the times all (or most of) your family has been together, either for a meal or some other activity during which conversation was possible. Try to answer the following questions for yourself in an attempt to get a sense of the communication patterns in your family.

a. Which topics were OK to discuss? Which were forbidden?

b. Who talked most often and/or most loudly?

c. Who talked to whom?

d. How did each family member act?

e. How did you feel inside?

f. What were you thinking?

g. How free did you feel to express what you were thinking?

SESSION II

Family Roles

Activity	Rationale
1. Discuss homework.	
a. Family Animals	1a. projective techniques to help members identify characteristics of family members.
b. Table Talk	1b. help members reflect on communication patterns, norms in family, their own part in the system.
2. Read Childhood Fantasy	2. to draw out fears that keep members in their old dysfunctional roles.
3. Discuss Childhood Fantasy	3. recognize previously functional nature of family roles, identify internal obstacles to breaking out of role now.
4. Process check on how the group is going.	4. reality check to see if the group is meeting their needs, to give them an opportunity for input.
5. Hand out homework for Session III. (Similarities and Differences)	

"BUT MOM (DAD) - I'M AN ADULT NOW!"

Session II - Childhood Fantasy

I'd like all of you to relax now, and get into a position that's very comfortable. . .Make sure that every part of your body is being supported, so that you feel no tension or strain in your muscles. . .Now close your eyes and rest quietly, being aware of your smooth, even breathing. . .Feel yourself settling into your body. . .As you breathe, imagine that any left over tension is being carried out of your body as you exhale. . .(Pause)

Now I'd like you to go back in time, smoothly and effortlessly, to when you were a child. You will remember a situation with your family when you played your family role, as only you could do it. A situation when you behaved pretty much the way you were expected to. Remember how important it felt to have a place in your family, to feel as if you belonged. Take minute and recall that situation. . .(Pause). How are you feeling in that situation?. . .How do the other family members respond to you?. . .

Now I'd like you to leave that situation behind you and move forward through time to an occasion in your recent past, during the last year or so. On this occasion you are again expected to play that familiar family role, but you find that it no longer suits you the way it used to. It's uncomfortable for you to act that way, you've outgrown that old role. Take a moment to experience that discomfort. . .(pause briefly). . .What about you is different now?. . .What are some of the ways you'd like to be able to act?. . .What would you like to be able to say?. . .(pause briefly). As you "try on" these alternatives, how do you feel? . . .If you are anxious or afraid, what do you fear?. . .How do you imagine your family will respond to you if you act differently?. . .What are the consequences for you for breaking out of your role?. . .Take a moment to become aware of these imagined consequences and how you feel about them. . .(Pause)

I'd like you now to come back to the present. Gradually become aware of the even fullness of your breathing. . .Now focus on your skin and how it feels to be touching the chair that is supporting you. Give yourself time to come back to this room. When you're ready to be here, very slowly open your eyes. . .

Possible discussion questions:

1. Describe your memories of your old family role. How did you behave and under what circumstances? How did other family members react to you? What function did that role serve for you and your family?

2. How does that role no longer suit you? If you had your way, how would you like to be able to act with your family? How do you imagine they would react to you if you did so? What sorts of messages from the other members of your family tend to keep you behaving in the ways that you've outgrown?

"BUT MOM (DAD) - I'M AN ADULT NOW!"

Similarities and Differences

Complete the following sentences as they best apply to you.

1. I am most like my father ...

2. I am least like my father ...

3. I am most like my mother ...

4. I am least like my mother ...

5. The issue/value on which my mother and I disagree most often is ...

6. My mother and I basically agree on the issue/value of ...

7. The issue/value which my father and I disagree most often is ...

8. My father and I basically agree on the issue/value of ...

SESSION III

Seeing Parents in a New Light

Activity	Rationale
1. Discuss "Similarities and Differences".	1. to help members focus on how their values and characteristics both mesh and clash with those of their parents, how they are both part of their family and also an individual.
2. Read Future Fantasy on parenting.	2. to help members empathize with parents' current situation--losing their child to adulthood.
3. Discuss Future Fantasy.	3. to bring out concept of the rights of parents' as they let go of their child.
4. Hand out homework for Session IV.	
a. Identifying Conflict Situations.	4a. to help them identify situations that cause conflict with their parents. These situations will be used the following week in assertion role plays.
b. Characteristics of Assertive, Aggressive, and Non-Assertive behavior.	4b-d. to give group members an opportunity to look over the concepts of Assertion before the next session.
c. Verbal and Non-Verbal components of the 3 types of behaviors.	
d. Types of Assertion.	

"BUT MOM (DAD) - I'M AN ADULT NOW!"

Session III - Future Fantasy

I'd like all of you to relax now, and get into a position that's very comfortable. . .Make sure that every part of your body is being supported, so that you feel no tension or strain in your muscles. . .Now close your eyes and rest quietly, being aware of your smooth, even breathing. . .Feel yourself settling into your body. . .As you breathe, imagine that any left over tension is being carried out of your body as you exhale. . .(pause)

Now, I want you to go forward in time, smoothly and effortlessly. . .Go forward to your wedding day. . .even if your plans are not to marry, imagine yourself in the situation. . .What do you notice around you at the ceremony? . . .How are you feeling?. . .What hopes and dreams do you and your spouse have for the future?. . .(pause)

Now, I'd like you to move ahead further in time. . .imagine that your first child is born. . .even if you plan not to have children, put yourself in the situation just for now. . .Is it a girl or a boy?. . .What will be her or his name?. . .How do you feel?. . .What are the added responsibilities you now will face in caring for and raising a child?.. .(pause)

Imagine that your child is growing up. . .imagine your son or daughter going through the "terrbile two's" stage. . .How do you feel?. . .Imagine his/hur first day of school. . .Imagine that she/he is progressing through grade school. . .See your child grow physically and emotionally. . .Notice the changes in how your child thinks, feels, and behaves. . .Notice the changes in yourself in how you relate to your son or daughter. . .How do you discipline your child?. . .What do you do when he/she comes to you with a problem?. . .How do you feel about your child growing up?. . .(pause)

Now I want you to go even further into the future. . .Imagine that your son or daughter is now a teenager. . .What changes are emerging in your teenager?. . .How are you handling her/his desire to become more independent? . . .How does it feel to not have your child rely on you as much for food, clothing, shelter, answers to problems, acceptance and love. . .What is it like to hear your child say that she/he wants to leave home?. . .(pause)

I'd like you now to come back to the present. . .Gradually become aware of your breathing again. . .Now focus on your skin and how it feels to be touching the floor, cushions, or whatever is supporting you. . .Give yourself time to come back to the group. . .When you're ready to be here, very slowly open your eyes. . .

Possible discussion questions

1. How did it feel for you to grow older?
2. How did it feel to watch your child grow older?
3. What was it like to have your child depend upon you? How did it feel to have her/him start living her/his own life and needing you less and less?
4. What do you understand now about what your parents might be feeling about your growing up?

"BUT MOM (DAD) - I'M AN ADULT NOW!"

Homework for Session IV

Identifying Conflict Situations

Think for a minute about the situations that trigger conflict between you and your parents, especially the ones that have to do with their expectations of you (at least as you perceive them). These may be issues that you have fought with them about and/or ones that you shut up about so as not to start a fight.

In order to learn how to handle these situations more effectively, it helps to practice them in advance, as we will be doing in the next group session. To get the most out of the next session, choose two such situations and answer these questions about them:

	Situation #1	Situation #2
1. Whom are you in conflict with?		
2. How do you feel?		
3. What specifically does this person do that triggers these feelings?		
4. What specifically do you want this person to do differently?		

CHARACTERISTICS OF ASSERTIVE, NON-ASSERTIVE AND AGGRESSIVE STYLES*

CHARACTERISTICS	ASSERTION	NON-ASSERTION	AGGRESSION
GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS:	Self-Enhancing	Self-denying	Self-enhancing at expense of another
	Chooses for self	Allows others to choose	Chooses for others
	Expressive	Inhibited	Direct, Domineering
	Emotionally honest, all emotions possible	Emotionally non-expressive or dishonest	Emotionally negative or dishonest
GOAL ACHIEVEMENT:	May achieve desired goal	Does not achieve desired goal	Achieves desired goal at expense of another
YOUR FEELINGS WHEN YOU ENGAGE IN THIS BEHAVIOR:	Confident and self-respecting at the time and later	Hurt and Anxious at the time; perhaps angry, resentful or guilty later	Self-righteous, Superior, or deprecatory of others at a time. Perhaps guilty later
THE OTHER PERSON'S FEELINGS ABOUT HIS/HERSELF WHEN YOU ENGAGE IN THIS BEHAVIOR:	Valued, respected	Guilty or superior	Hurt, Humiliated
THE OTHER PERSON'S FEELINGS ABOUT YOU WHEN YOU ENGAGE IN THIS BEHAVIOR:	Respect	Pity, Disgust, Irritation	Anger, resentment, vengeance

*Compiled and adapted from Dr. Patricia Jakubowski-Spector, University of Missouri; and Alberti & Emmons, Stand Up, Speak Out, Talk Back! New York: Pocket Books.

VERBAL AND NON-VERBAL COMPONENTS OF BEHAVIORS

	NON-ASSERTIVE	ASSERTIVE	AGGRESSIVE
VERBAL	Apologetic words. Veiled meanings. Hedging; failure to come to point. Rambling; disconnected. At loss for words. Failure to say what you really mean. "I mean," "you know".	Statement of wants. Honest statement of feelings. Objective words. Direct statements, which say what you mean. "I" - messages.	"Loaded" words. Accusations. Descriptive, subjective terms. Imperious, superior words. "You" - messages, that blame or label.
Voice	Weak, hesitant, soft, sometimes wavering.	Firm, warm, well-modulated, relaxed.	Tense, shrill, loud, shaky, cold, "deadly quiet"; demanding, superior, authoritarian.
NON-VERBAL			
A. General	Actions instead of words, hoping someone will guess what you want. Looking as if you don't mean what you say.	Attentive listening behavior. General assured manner, communicating caring and strength.	Exaggerated show of strength. Flippant, sarcastic style. Air of superiority.
B. Specific			
(1) Eyes	Averted, downcast, teary, pleading.	Open, frank, direct. Eye contact, but not staring.	Expressionless, narrowed; cold; staring not really "seeing" you.
(2) Stance & Posture	Lean for support; stooped; excessive head nodding.	Well-balanced, straight-on; erect, relaxed.	Hands on hips; feet apart. Stiff & rigid; rude, imperious.
(3) Hands	Fidgety, fluttery, clammy.	Relaxed motions.	Clenched; abrupt gestures; finger-pointing, fist pounding.

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Types of Assertion

1. I want statements: I want to do this. I want you to do this. Caution: Be careful that it is not interpreted as a non-negotiable demand.

2. I feel statements: When you did that, I felt this way. "That" is a specific behavior; "this way" is a specific feeling.

3. Mixed feeling statements: Name more than one feeling and explain where each is coming from.

4. Empathic assertion: Conveys some sensitivity to the other person's situation, feelings, wants, beliefs, followed by another statement which stands up for the speaker's rights.

5. Confrontive assertion: Has three parts:
   a. Objectively describe what other person said would be done;
   b. Describe what the other person actually did do;
   c. Express what you want.

6. I-language assertion: This is especially useful for expressing negative feelings. It involves a 4-part statement:
   a. When . . . (objectively describe the other's behavior).
   b. The effects are . . . (describe how their behavior concretely affects your life or feelings.
   c. I feel . . . (describe your feelings).
   d. I'd prefer . . . (describe what you want).

SESSION IV

Assertion

Activity	Rationale
1. Yes-No Exercise a. members pair off, leaders pair with more assertive members. b. one member says "yes" and the other "no", experimenting with assertive, aggressive, and non-assertive styles. Continue for a few minutes.	1. warm-up, energizer, to introduce experientially the feelings of assertion, aggression, and non-assertion.
2. Review assertion handouts.	2. to provide them with a cognitive framework and introduce potentially more effective ways of dealing with conflict situations with parents.
3. Hand out the "Rights of Emerging Adults" generated from Session I.	3. to help prepare them for the role-plays by reminding them of their rights.
4. Model role play by leaders, process and critique.	4. to show and critique <u>in vivo</u> examples of Assertive, Aggressive, and Non-Assertive behavior.
5. Volunteer practice role plays by members (using conflict situations from homework). If group N=6 or more, break into 2 small groups.	5. to give members an opportunity to practice assertion with their parents and receive feedback from the leaders and other members.

"BUT MOM (DAD) - I'M AN ADULT NOW"

Example of the "Rights of an Emerging Adult"

(from Session I)

We have the right to . . . .

1. choose what we want
2. drink
3. not study all the time
4. not always let you know what we're doing
5. not be active and have lots of friends
6. make mistakes
7. come in late
8. not listen to you (parents)
9. get the grades we want
10. get serious when I want to
11. have own moods
12. go out alone
13. question
14. have own priorities
15. get pregnant
16. not tell everything to parents
17. budget out money and time according to our own value
18. choose when to be responsible
19. live where we want
20. grow up at own rate
21. make own choice to take drugs
22. have sex
23. choose own friends/lifestyle

SESSION V

Closure

Activity	Rationale
1. Discussion of break (if applicable).	1. to provide members with an opportunity to debrief and share with the group their attempts at finding new ways to deal with parents.
2. Additional member role plays and process.	2. to provide an opportunity for fine-tuning and solidifying newly-acquired assertive skills.
3. Overview of "Stages of Dependency" model (developed by the authors).	3. provide members with a conceptual framework to describe the developmental process they/their family are engaged in.

a. 4-stage developmental process that almost everybody goes through:

(1) dependence--usually in childhood)--wanting to be taken care of, told what to do, free from responsibilities.

(2) counterdependence--(usually in adolescence)--going to the other extreme; rebelling against dependence/authority, but not yet really feeling able to stand on own.

(3) independence--(usually in early adulthood)--experiencing both the added freedom and responsibility of being on their own, often accompanied by an emotional and/or geographic distance from parents/family to "test their wings".

(4) interdependence--(usually later adulthood)--feeling confident enough in their own ability to take care of themselves that they can allow themselves either to depend on their parents or let their parents depend on them--whichever (if either) is appropriate.

Activity	Rationale

3. Overview of "Stages of Dependency" model.

b. About the process:

(1) each of the members may be at a different point (which doesn't mean one is better than another).

(2) everybody cycles back through the process to some extent when confronted with major life changes (e.g., moving to a new place, starting a new job, relationship breakup).

(3) their parents are also going through the complementary process of learning to let them go. This may be more difficult for the parents than it is for the student.

c. About the conflict/discomfort the students experience. Due to at least 2 factors:

(1) their parents' adverse reaction to the student's changing role.

(2) the student's own reluctance to give up the advantages of depending on the parents.

d. How can this group help?

(1) has given them the "big picture" to help put their situation in perspective.

(2) understanding the process will help them put less blame on themselves (What's wrong with me?") and their parents ("Why do they treat me so unfairly?").

(3) they learned some different ways to cope and deal with the process.

(4) they had the chance to hear about situations that are both similar to and different from their own.

Session IV continued

Activity	Rationale
4. "Removal of Barriers" closure experience.	4. to review learning over last 5 weeks, to generate strategies for dealing with perceived barriers, and to help members leave group with an action plan.
5. Fill out consumer evaluation forms.	5. to gather specific feedback about the helpfulness/impactfullness of the various components of the 5-week intervention.

"Removal of Barriers"

A Closure Experience

1. The facilitator briefly mentions that this activity will help integrate the participants' learning in the group and will leave them with a definite plan of action. S/he then distributes two pieces of paper and a pencil to each participant.

2. The facilitator instructs the participants to label one piece of paper "ideas I want to use as a result of this group." S/he asks the participants to list on the paper all the ideas they would like to pursue. Each item should be numbered, and both sides of the paper can be used.

3. After about eight to ten minutes, or when most of the participants appear to be finished, the facilitator instructs them to label the second sheet of paper "Barriers to Action." S/he instructs the participants to list all the barriers that will hinder putting the ideas listed on the first sheet effectively into action.

4. The facilitator instructs the participants to place an asterisk (*) by each of the barriers that they believe to be insurmountable.

5. The facilitator asks the participants to draw a line through "barriers" that could easily be dealt with. (This step usually eliminates most of the barriers that are not starred.)

6. Each participant then affirms publicly the ideas s/he plans to put into action.

7. After each participant has announced the definite actions s/he plans to take, the barriers holding back other actions are listed on chalkboard or newsprint. The group then brainstorms ideas to help circumvent the other barriers listed by each participant, starting with those that were not starred.

8. If plausible ways of dealing with a perceived barrier are found and the participant accepts the idea that it is possible for him/her to put the idea into action, s/he should then affirm this intention to the group.

Adapted from Vincent Peterson in Affective Education, edited by Louis Thayer.

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Consumer Evaluation

Please evaluate how helpful/unhelpful the following components were to you in this group and/or how you would improve the group with respect to these areas:

(a) Lecture Material (e.g., stages of dependency; assertion; family roles).

(b) Homework Assignments (e.g., family animals, table talk, identifying situations to be worked on with family).

(c) Icebreakers (e.g., yes-no exercise; name game).

(d) Group discussions

(e) Group Exercise (e.g., brainstorming rights; fantasy exercises; "what did you get from the group"; assertion practice)

(f) Group Leaders

(g) Other comments/suggestions/criticisms/praises: